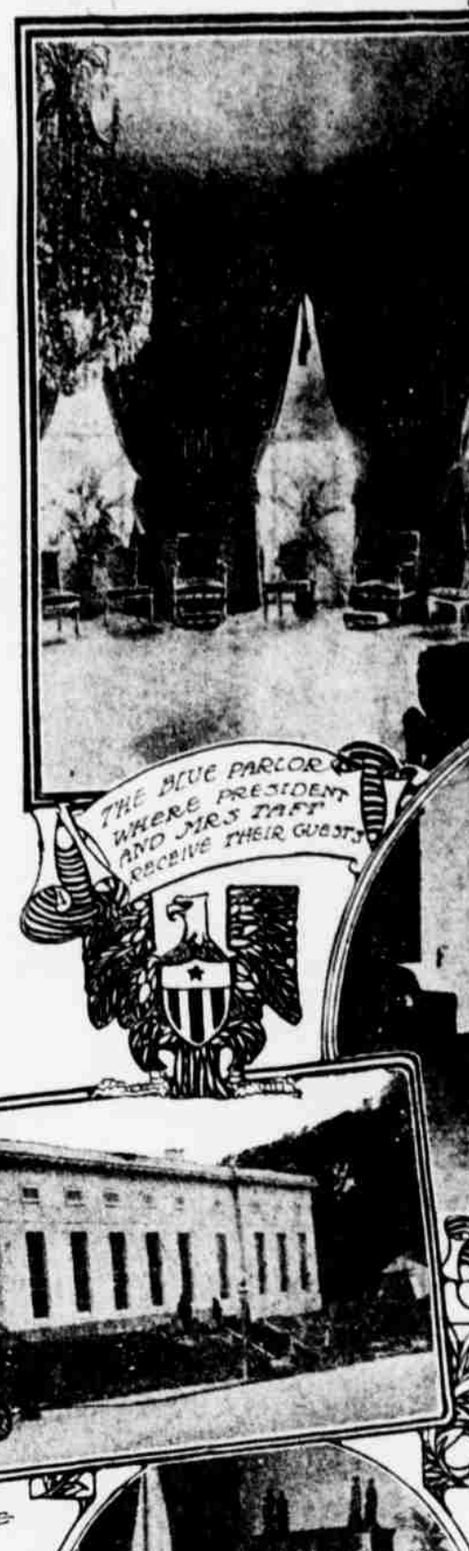
HANDLING WHITE HOUSE VISITORS

by EDWARD B. CLARK



LITTLE BY LITTLE President Taft has come into direct line with one of the Roosevelt policies, and he will follow it in the future as he has been following it for some weeks. It will be the rule at the summer capital at Beverly, Mass., as it is today the fixed rule of procedure in the White House.

The Roosevelt policy which President Taft finally has adopted as his own is the method of receiving visitors which was in force during the colonel's tenure of office. It is possible that President Taft never will be able to adopt the Roosevelt policy of getting rid of his visitors, because the two men are constitutionally different in at least one respect. It must be said, however, that the Roosevelt plan of receiving guests has done a good deal to save the tempers of White House visitors and the time of Mr. Taft.

As everybody knows, an addition was made to the White House offices some time ago. In the Roosevelt days callers went into the cabinet room and from there either were ushered into the adjoining room, where the president sat, or waited while Mr. Roosevelt came out and made a circuit of the cabinet room, speaking to one caller after another and getting through with his work quickly and yet without giving offense.

Now President Taft has a circular room all to himself, and while the visitors are allowed the two big rooms outside, it is from these rooms they find there way to the president's presence, being let in eight or ten at a time, and not one at a time, as was the case when Mr. Taft first took office.

The president has adopted the Roosevelt method of passing from visitor to visitor learning the wants of each and trying as best he can to suit each caller and to get rid of him as quickly as courtesy will permit. President Taft, however, is so good natured and is so humanly interested in matters not connected with politics or legislation that of his own volition he lingers long frequently with individual visitors, and so while the method of reception hastens things in a measure it cannot offset the delay that comes from the president's apparent desire to have every guest put into good humor and to leave him "with a smile in his heart."

At the outset of the Taft administration visitors saw him one at a time and the one who was talking to him did not feel the spur of haste which is now felt by the presence in the room of half a dozen or a dozen other visitors, all eagerly waiting their turn and occasionally shifting uneasily in their seats because of the time that the one who has the president's ear is taking up.

President Roosevelt, just as President Taft, was humanly interested in a great many things which did not affect public matter. For instance, if a well-known sportsman called Mr. Roosevelt would perhaps talk to him for half an hour about big game shooting or the best way to reach the haunts of some wild creature which the colonel never had had the pleasure of meeting at the end of the gun. One of President Taft's hobbies is baseball, and every league team that visits Washington calls at the White House, where its members talk of curves, inshoots, drop balls and the best way to place hits, to the man who, weary of railroad legislation and tariff talk, is willing in spirit to get on the diamond for a few minutes.

President Taft's good nature is proverbial. During the late spring and early summer in Washington school children literally by the thousands poured into the capital. It seems that in some cities the children of the high schools give entertainments during the winter and charge admission thereto. The money that is thus obtained is used to pay the expenses of the pupils to Washington. In cases where the children's parents are able to bear the expenses of the trip the money is used to pay the expenses of boys and girls who otherwise could not undertake the journey.

One day at the White House there appeared a delegation of 450 school children. The president had a number of appointments with senators and representatives and with prominent men from a distance. Notwithstanding this he told his secretary that the door should be thrown open and that the school children should be admitted. He not only made them a speech, but he shook hands with each one and had a word beyond the perfunctory "Glad to see you," to say to each pupil as he or she went by.

The story of the welcome which the 450 children had went abroad and for days the president's mornings were busy with the work of welcoming the pupils of schools from all the eastern states. The children always are accompanied by several teachers, who chaperon them and make preparations for their sightseeing. As soon as they reach Washington the representative in congress from the district or districts in which the schools are situated are called upon, and the congressmen in nearly every case lead the way to the presence of the president.

The wonder is if the country knows how much hard work goes on in the White House, not only in the president's office, but in all the adjoining offices. If anyone envies the private secretary his position perhaps he would throw envy to the winds after watching Charles Dyer Norton go through one day's labor. The assistant secretary works just as hard as does the chief secretary and in the office communicating with the room of these two hard-working men is a room filled with stenographers and clerks hard at work.

There is one White House clerk who has a most painstaking job. Invitations to the semi-public White House receptions of course are engraved, but as the name of each person invited must appear on the engraved ticket of admission which accompanies the invitation, one line of the ticket must be left blank because the engraving of 4,000 individual names, one to go on each card, would be an endless task and a tremendous expense. It is the duty of one of the clerks to fill in the names and to do it so that the writing shall look as though it were engraved. This he does in a way that deceives the ordinary eyesight. A card of admission to one of the White House receptions looks as if it were all the work of the engraver, so fine is the handicraft of the man who fills in the vacant line with the tracing of his ordinary pen.

About a year and a half ago the clerk who did this engraving died and it became necessary to find some one to take his place. It was supposed that this would be a hopeless task, or that at the best the services of a man must be obtained who after long practise might be able to accomplish what his predecessor so successfully had done. To the surprise of everybody the first cards of invitation that went out were just as deceptive as far as engraving and handwriting were concerned as were those that had gone from the desk of the man who for years had labored at the task and had arrived at a perfection which it was supposed no one without months of practise could reach.

One of President Taft's daily tasks is to sign the commissions of officers of the army and navy, and of men appointed to various positions in civil life. Of course commissions are for the most part engraved, but there are names and dates to be filled in and these are written deftly and then the pile of parchment is laid on the desk before the president, who frequently in a seemingly automatic way signs his name to commission after commission while carrying on with some visitor at his elbow a conversation relating perhaps to intricate matters of state.

The White House officials, secretaries and clerks have to concern themselves with all kinds of matters. Secretary Norton is the recipient of letters from people all over the United States, who write to the president upon the most trivial affairs.

When one takes into consideration the fact that hundreds of persons who have really legitimate business with the White House either call or write every day, it can be seen at once that the secretary's hands, time and mind are well filled. There are certain orders of rank which have to be respected, and in a democracy it is pretty hard work to convince the ordinary citizen that any man has the right of precedence. As far as precedent is concerned the president's audiences are governed by the supposed importance of the visitor's official business. For instance, if a senator is waiting to see the president and a cabinet officer happens to come in the member of the president's official family always will see President Taft first unless he says specifically that his business is of little importance and expresses a willingness that the senator shall get to the president ahead of him.

A newspaper man with whom President Taft has had frequently personal relations for some years went to the White House one morning and told Mr. Taft that he would like to see him alone for a minute if he could, and so the president took him into a side room and closed the door. They staid together talking for fifteen minutes and then the newspaper man went out into the president's main office, leaving the president behind him to write a letter in seclusion. On entering the president's office the caller met a senator who had been waiting for fifteen minutes. The senator is a jovial soul and with mock solemnity of spirit he bowed low to the newspaper man. "Would you mind going back to ask the president," said the senator, "if now that he has completed his affairs of state with a newspaper correspondent he will consent to see an humble senator of the United States?"

The ambassadors and ministers representing foreign countries in Washington are great sticklers for precedence and every known means has to be taken to prevent giving them offense. It is almost impossible for any human being except one or two of the state department officials, to keep rigid track of the rank of the diplomats and the attaches at all the foreign legations in Washington. So it occasionally happens that some second assistant secretary of the legation of the king of the cannibal islands is allowed to get into a room ahead of the first assistant secretary of the legation of the king of ballyhoo, and then there are black looks which if they could be put into words would be tantamount to a declaration of war against the United States.

The American officials in Washington life are not above being piqued if a junior gets in ahead of a senior, though troubles of this kind are confined as far as Americans are concerned almost wholly to social offenses, for senators, representatives, supreme court judges and the rest have finally made up their minds that at the White House one must take his changes of precedence.

DEFENDS WOMEN SMOKERS

Miss Eleanor Sears, Boston Society Leader, Sees No Harm in Puffing Cigarettes.

Boston.—Miss Eleanor Sears, foremost exponent of outdoor sports, a social favorite here and at Newport, a leader in every contest of skill which interests the richer set and one of the fifteen really fashionable persons mentioned as living in Boston by Rev. C. W. de Lyon Nichols, while not advocating the smoking of cigarettes, says she does not believe their use by women does any great harm.

Miss Eleanor Sears.

"There are many women who smoke cigarettes, although I do not think that the majority of these women smoke them to excess. Of course, excessive smoking greatly injures the lungs and weakens the heart action. Every one knows that.

"Excessive cigarette smoking, like anything else excessive, injures the physical condition of the body and there are many women in society who are inveterate smokers.

"Of course, I do not mean to say that all society women smoke cigarettes. There is a class which does not care for them. That is their reason for not smoking them. They simply do not wish to.

"In a comparison of the two habits, namely, smoking and drinking liquor, I should say that by all means the latter was more harmful. We hear sometimes that girls of sixteen in wealthy homes smoke cigarettes. Just as a boy likes to steal a smoke, so, sometimes, a girl of sixteen may, but this does not imply that girls of that age are smokers in any sense of the word.

"For my own part, I find too much to occupy my interest, my time and my attention out of doors in the world of recreation and sport and otherwise to become a cigarette smoker."

WOMAN A GOOD POLITICIAN

Miss Clara Bubb Is Ably Assisting the Democrats of Missouri in Campaign.

St. Louis, Mo.—The history of campaigns in Missouri for several years has shown the guiding hand of a woman in the planning and executing of political fights. It was so two years ago, when both the Republican and Democratic committees employed women in confidential capacities, and it is true this campaign, at least with the Democratic state committee, which has a woman in its headquarters in the Commonwealth Trust building.

Two years ago Miss Clara Bubb, who lives with her parents, came to St. Louis on election day. Her first glimpse of the excitement of an election came with her arrival in St. Louis. When the returns began to come in she was more anxious, even to assist in directing an election, and this year her ambitions are to be gratified.

Miss Clara Bubb.

When the Democratic organization established its headquarters, several months ago, at Broadway and Olive street, and placed Claude T. Jarvis in charge as assistant to Secretary A. L. Harty of Bloomfield, the committee authorized Jarvis to employ an assistant. It was then that Miss Bubb became attached to the Democratic headquarters.

Not only is Miss Bubb an assistant to Jarvis, but when he is busy with other matters, and when Executive Chairman W. H. Johnson of Montgomery City is in St. Louis, it is to the young lady to whom the state leaders turn for detail of the headquarters. Since the press headquarters have opened in the same suite of offices the woman has been of invaluable service.

THE REASON.

Janitor—I know the water is turned off. I'm sorry, but it isn't my fault.

Tenant—I know, and I guess that's why you're sorry.

The Deacon's Parable.

A self-conscious and egotistical young clergyman was supplying the pulpit of a country church. After the service he asked one of the deacons, a grizzled, plain-spoken man, what he thought of his morning effort.

"Waal," answered the old man, slowly, "I'll tell ye in a kind of parable. I remember Tunk Weatherbee's first deer hunt, when he was green. He follered the deer's tracks all right, but he follered 'em all day in the wrong direction."—Housekeeper.

Comparing Notes.

Mrs. Newly—My little Robbie is remarkably strong; he is only four years old, but he can raise his high chair with one hand!

Mr. Spoodler—Oh, that's nothing; in the apartment house where I try to do my sleeping there's a baby that's only four months old, and that child can raise the roof with no hand at all.

Qualified.

"How does your new book go?"

"Great! I am convinced that it is a classic."

"A classic? What convinces you of that?"

"Everybody has either seen it or heard of it, but nobody has read it."

Plenty of Material.

"Son," said the press humorist, "you have inherited some of my humor."

"Not enough to make a living with, dad."

"Never mind. I'm going to leave you all of my jokes."